1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

for a tooth; but nowadays this is generally satisfied by invoking the police and the courts. But distances are great in Bastar, and in the rains, when the early hill grains are ripe, communications are bad; often the villagers conspire to hush up a murder or leave it to those affected to take their own direct action, rather than disorganise agricultural work by the troubles of a long police enquiry followed by committal proceedings and a sessions trial.

It is a relief to return from this darker side of the Bison-horn Maria's character to the light-heartedness of all Marias, but especially the Hill Maria. An engaging feature of this is his readiness to burlesque himself. A village *gaita* (headman) at Tondawada set the whole camp in fits of laughter by his description of his first vain attempts to use a pair of bullocks in the plough, mimicking himself pulled hither and thither by these wild-cat animals; at Hikul I was treated to a similar comic representation of what would happen if a Maria attempted to milk a cow. They are quick to seize on any foibles or peculiarities of individuals, without respect of persons, and have a happy knack of inventing apposite nicknames; this trait is common throughout the State, where there are nicknames for almost every State official current among all the primitive tribes, while few of the leading Hindu and Mohammedan settlers are referred to by their true names.

Frankness and honesty are still as characteristic as ever of the hill men and the wilder Bison-horn Marias, and many a man arraigned for homicide will state in court perfectly frankly why it was essential to kill his victim and how it was done. I have very seldom found any hesitate to answer any questions, even about the most intimate domestic matters. The Bison-horn Maria, however, being, at least in the open tracts, more sophisticated, is inclined to be suspicious; and he certainly is learning the ways of the courts, and how to defeat a justice administered on the evidence and not according to the facts; many know, for example, that the death penalty may be escaped if you can convince your judge that you murdered your victim because you believed him to be bewitching you. But in general a Maria witness can still be relied upon to speak the truth, although it involve his dearest relatives or himself in trouble; and the occasional pleader from British India is soon hopelessly at sea if he tries his usual methods of cross-examination even on a Bison-horn Maria who knows Halbi. Fortunately, the restoration of the criminal and civil jurisdiction of the village and *pargana* panchayats will considerably reduce Maria experience of the law courts. The Hill Maria never has had much recourse to them, petty theft being almost unknown and murder rare. His attitude may to some extent be gauged by the following example.

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695 There was a disputed boundary between the village of Kurmer in the Chhota Dongar Mar *pargana* and the adjacent Kutru Mar village of Jatalur; the Jata clan asserted possession over a strip of land belonging to the Parllo clan of Kurmer. I suggested, on the strength of a tale I had heard of former Chiefs' methods of justice, that the head of each village should come with a cock to the land, and that the land should go to the clan whose cock crowed first. This was hailed by both sides as a sound solution, and off we went to the land; but just before we reached it the Jata headman began to hang back, and finally backed out of the test; I awarded the land to the Parllo clan to the approval of men present from other clans, and on going over the land found that it contained a *pagh'ai* or alternative village site of the Parllo clan besides the cromlech left to mark the site of the Village Mother's 'temple', the *kasyaq-gaita's udam-garia* or seat of honour, and the *kotokal* or line of menhirs erected in the name of the Parllo dead. Here the Jata clan finally abandoned their claim when challenged by the Parllo *kasyaq-gaita* to eat earth from under the Village Mother's cromlech.

181 To be left to live the free life of the hills, untrammelled by restrictions on his user of forest, earth and water or his right to shift his village and his *penda* cultivation, is the unconscious ideal of the Hill Maria. If he is sentenced to a long term of imprisonment, he will beg to be hanged rather than be confined within walls; and few of them or of the wilder Bison-horn Marias survive long imprisonment.

517 The Hill Maria shows great artistry in his bead-work, and is never at fault in his discrimination between colours and shades, [832] though he uses for all shades of green and blue the one word *kaqarondla*. He has general terms also for red, white, black and yellow, but none for intermediate shades. In his houses he draws 532 rude cup-marking patterns, *swastikas* and strange creatures in white earth on his mud plaster, or makes rough clay representations of women's breasts. His songs are low and rather melancholic in 533 sound, the youths' voices verging on contralto; but they are far easier for an English ear to understand than Hindu music, and have often a haunting refrain. Both he and the Bison-horn Maria love to hear European records on a gramophone, especially a good soprano or contralto, sea shanties, and violins or trios and quartets playing light chamber music; but operatic fireworks merely provoke laughter, Chaliapin singing the 'Song of Prince Igor' making them [534] ache with laughter, but being often encored. The Marias as a whole have no musical instruments except drums. Though the 517 Bison-horn Maria does not show the Hill Maria's artistry and 153

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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In the chapter on marriage we saw how the elders had to witness the betrothal ceremonies, and how the *panchayats* deal with cases of divorce and elopement. It may be added that among the Hill Marias the clan-headman, like the *Sendhia* of the Chanda Marias, gets certain traditional fees which the parties have to pay in addition to the compensation which the *panchayat* may award to the injured parents or husband, or to the cost of the tribal feast; at every marriage in Kutru and Bhairamgarh Mar the clan-headman gets a fee of eight annas; when a *panchayat* has settled the compensation to be given to the first husband by the man with whom his wife has eloped, the old and the new husband have each to pay the clan-headman four annas. But the latter is expected not to retain the whole of his fee-income, but to divide it with the headmen of the villages of his clan who have assisted in the ceremony or *panchayat*.

I have already described on page 246 above, the ordeal to which the Gume Hill Maria clan *panchayat* in 1929 subjected a Toinar youth accused of incest with a girl of his clan. How far the ordeal survives in the remotest parts of the State I cannot say; naturally instances of its use very seldom come to light. There is reason to believe that ordeals of this kind were a regular feature of the 'justice' administered by bygone Chiefs and zamindars of Bastar, rather than a product of aboriginal thought; compare the account of the settlement of the Kudmer-Jatalur land dispute at page 96 above. Ordinarily, however, the *panchayats* follow no regular procedure beyond hearing the parties and their friends as informally as possible and deciding the case then and there after free discussion among themselves.

Questions of property seldom arise among the Hill Marias, there being obviously so little scope for dispute when 95 per cent. of the cultivation is shifting cultivation of hillsides regarded as the property of the clan and not of the individual, and when the village site is shifted at least every six years. Sons after marriage live in a separate portion of the long-house of their father or uncle, if there is space for adding a portion for them, or else build a separate house as close as possible; when next the village is shifted there is ample space for all to live in separate houses under one long-house roof. Questions of inheritance of houses therefore arise only when, as among the Bison-horn Marias, villages have become permanent and are not shifted at regular intervals. Even here, however, there are few disputes. The little value set on houses is shown by the fact that it is generally the youngest son who lives on in the father's house after his death, as probably his elder brothers will have married long before him and built separate houses for themselves on marriage. There is among the Bison-horn Marias a vague right to demand

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

horticulture would be the ideal occupations in such a jail village, for the average aboriginal remains an agricultural novice.

As to the death sentence there is little to add to Mr Elwin's remarks in Chapter XVIII. Murder and violence were far more frequent in Bastar in the past than they have been since 1910, the Rebellion year, and at one time executions were carried out publicly in Pargana headquarters for deterrent reasons. This possibly had some effect on the vendetta and the bully. My own practice was to impose the death sentence only in cases of premeditated murder or murder with robbery. The very formidable and steady increase of murders and attempted murders in Hyderabad State ever since the virtual suspension of capital punishment is a warning against removal of the fear of death. And though death may be asked for by an occasional Maria in preference to long years of prison, its finality and grimness are realized even by them, and recognized at times as the only appropriate penalty. This happened when I sentenced Marvi Aita of Paknar (H. Case No 45) to death. The whole trial was impressive. I held it at Paknar, travelling there in the first motor car to use a newly made forest road and followed by a bus bringing assessors, counsel, accused and police escort; we were held up in the few villages through which we passed so that the *perma* and elders might sacrifice cocks and sprinkle blood on the car and bus wheels. The accused had been the village bully, and after the trial, which had added drama from taking place on the actual spot where Aita had deliberately shot Kamlu Masa dead with an arrow as he and his helper neighbours were bringing home his kodon harvest, when I had pronounced sentence, the entire village filed before me to touch my feet in gratitude for freeing them from the perpetual menace of Aita's bullying, and it was then only that I learnt that he had been wrongly acquitted by a former Diwan on a previous murder charge and had been guilty also of yet another killing which the village had been afraid to report.

Let me conclude this Foreword by warmly recommending the book to all whose duties bring them into contact with the aboriginal, though it is so to speak only a study